

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SAIGON 04793 120502Z

42

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-05 OMB-01 /073 W

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R 111123Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5169

INFO JEC PARIS 5842

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 4793

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, VS

SUBJECT: BOMBING OF INDEPENDENCE PALACE

1. FOLLOWING APRIL 8 BOMBING OF INDEPENDENCE PALACE, GVN IMPOSED 24 HOUR CURFEW WHICH WAS ANNOUNCED ON RADIO AND BROADCAST TO PUBLIC VIA SOUND TRUCKS. STREETS WERE CLEARED BY NOON. IN EARLY AFTERNOON GVN ANNOUNCED THAT CURFEW WOULD BE LIFTED AT 1500 LOCAL TIME WITH RESULT AFTERNOON AND EVENING ACTIVITY IN CITY WAS NORMAL THOUGH LIGHTER THAN USUAL. FEAR AND PANIC ON PART OF POPULACE WAS AVERTED BY PROMPT GVN EXPLANATION OF INCIDENT AND SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCE OF PRESIDENT HIMSELF ON RADIO AND TV (SAIGON 4470). MEANWHILE, PRIME MINISTER DESIGNATE NGUYEN BA CAN AND NUMBER RVNAF COMMANDERS ISSUED STATEMENTS CONDEMNING INCIDENT AND EMPHASIZING THAT BOMBING AN INDIVIDUAL ACT AND NOT COUP D' ETAT ATTEMPT ORGANIZED BY MILITARY. STATEMENTS WERE AIRED ON SAIGON DOMESTIC SERVICE THROUGHOUT DAY AND EVENING AND PRESIDENT THIEU'S ADDRESS REPEATED NUMEROUS TIMES ON TV ON EVENING APRIL 8. ALL SAIGON NEWSPAPERS REPORTED INCIDENT IN BANNER HEADLINES AND MOST CARRIED FULL TEXT OF PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT.

2. AT 0800 GMT 8 APRIL 75, COMMANDER OF VIETNAM NAVY ISSUED ORDER OF DAY DECLARING THAT: "ALL OF THE RVN ARMED FORCES AND PEOPLE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SAIGON 04793 120502Z

ARE VERY GLAD TO KNOW THAT THE PRESIDENT IS SAFE AND IS CONTINU-

ING TO LEAD THE COUNTRY WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, THE PRIME MINISTER, THE CHIEF OF THE JGS, AND THE COMMANDERS OF THE VARIOUS ARMED SERVICES AND BRANCHES, ARMY CORPS AND MILITARY REGIONS." DESCRIBING THE BOMBING AS AN "ILL-CONSIDERED ACT OF A FEW PEOPLE BELONGING TO A GROUP ADVOCATING A DANGEROUS POLITICAL POLICY," COMMANDER CHUNG TAN CANG CALLED UPON NAVAL LEADERS TO "CORRECTLY IMPLEMENT ALL ORDERS RECEIVED, FIRMLY MAINTAIN THEIR ORGANIZATIONS, AND HIGHLY DEVELOP THE SPIRIT OF OBSERVING DISCIPLINE AND FIGHTING EAGERLY IN ALL DIFFICULT SITUATIONS."

3. ONE HOUR LATER, SAIGON DOMESTIC SERVICE CARRIED ORDER OF DAY OF CHIEF OF JGS WHICH STATED THAT "AN UNDISCIPLINED PILOT TOOK REBELLIOUS ACTION, BOMBING INDEPENDENCE PALACE" BUT DID NOT CAUSE SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE. STRESSING THAT "THIS WAS ONLY BLIND, ISOLATED ACTION," JGS CHIEF CALLED ON ALL MILITARY ELEMENTS AND INDIVIDUALS TO "REMAIN CLEARSIGHTED AND CALM, TO FIRMLY HOLD THEIR WEAPONS ON ALL FRONTS, TO EXERT EFFORTS TO SERVE, AND TO STRICTLY OBSERVE DISCIPLINE SO AS TO CHECK THE AGGRESSOR ENEMY AND PROTECT THE COMPATRIOTS' SECURITY."

4. AT 1100 GMT ON SAME DAY SAIGON DOMESTIC SERVICE RAN PRIME MINISTER DESIGNATE NGUYEN BA CAN'S STATEMENT THAT HE AND CABINET AD INTERIM ARE "DEEPLY MOVED AND INDIGNANT OVER THIS REBELLIOUS ACTION TAKEN BY THOSE PLOTTING TO ELIMINATE THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL RVN REGIME." CAN'S STATEMENT CALLED ON "ALL COMPATRIOTS TO REMAIN CALM" AND "CLOSE THEIR RANKS AROUND THE PRESIDENT AND FIGHT FOR NATIONAL SURVIVAL."

5. IN A STATEMENT AIRED AT 1021 GMT, RVNAF COMMANDER EXPLAINED THAT: "ON THE MORNING OF 8 APRIL, A FIRST LIEUTENANT F-5 PILOT, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF AN OPERATIONAL SORTIE AND CITING TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES TO DECEIVE HIS FLIGHT COMMANDER AND DETACH HIMSELF FROM HIS FLIGHT, BOMBED INDEPENDENCE PALACE. A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION REVEALS THAT THIS WAS THE INDIVIDUAL, SEPARATE, SHORTSIGHTED, AND SENSELESS ACTION OF A YOUNG PILOT WHO HAD BEEN BRIBED AND MISUSED.." RVNAF COMMANDER'S STATEMENT EMPHASIZED THAT BOMBING "ONLY BENEFITS ENEMY" AND "BETRAYS THE COMRADES IN ARMS" WHO ARE ENGAGED IN "LIFE-OR-DEATH STRUGGLE AGAINST THE COMMUNIST AGGRESSOR ENEMY."

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 SAIGON 04793 120502Z

6. COMMENT: EMBASSY HAS NO INFORMATION TO INDICATE ACT WAS ANYTHING OTHER THAN THE ACT OF ONE INDIVIDUAL PILOT ACTING ALONE. ALTHOUGH THE SITUATION IS TENSE AND THE ARMED FORCES HAVE LOST CONSIDERABLE CONFIDENCE IN THIEU, OFFICERS WE TALK TO ALMOST TO A MAN DEPLORE ANY COUP MOVE AS LIKELY TO BRING ABOUT DISASTROUS INTERNAL DISORDER AND A TERMINATION OF EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE.

7. DESPITE GVN DENIALS, SOME VIETNAMESE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE BOMBING PART OF ORGANIZED COUP ATTEMPT OR AT VERY LEAST A WARNING TO PRES THIEU. OTHERS EXPRESSED VIEW THAT EVENT UNDERSCORES EXTENT TO WHICH MILITARY HAS LOST CONFIDENCE IN PRES THIEU AND WARNED THAT IF HE REMAINED IN OFFICE, SIMILAR INCIDENTS COULD BE EXPECTED TO OCCUR IN NEAR FUTURE.

8. GOVT STATEMENTS CONTAIN CURIOUS MIX OF SUGGESTION BOMBING WAS INDIVIDUAL ACT AND SUGGESTION THAT OTHERS INVOLVED. THIEU'S ALLEGATION THAT THE INCIDENT WAS WORK OF GROUP WHO HAVE PUBLICLY BEEN DEMANDING OVERTHROW OF PRESENT CONSTITUTIONAL REGIME FOR SEVERAL DAYS PROBABLY INTENDED AS REFERENCE TO OPPOSITION FIGURES WHO HAVE RECENTLY GROUPED THEMSELVES AROUND NGUYEN CAO KY IN CALLING FOR THIEU'S RESIGNATION.

9. THREE DAYS HAVE PASSED SINCE BOMBING AND INCIDENT CURRENTLY RECEIVING LITTLE IF ANY ATTENTION BY PRESS OR POLITICAL CIRCLES IN SAIGON.
MARTIN

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